

Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing by Deirdre David. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1996. xiv, 234 pp. 7 illust. ISBN 0-8014-3170-0, \$37.50 (cloth). ISBN 0-8014-8277-1, \$15.95 (paper).

Deirdre David's *Rule Britannia* begins by posing the question of how the tropical fruit got to Brixton in the twentieth century. The question itself only seems to be a simple one, for it is actually David's way of representing metonymically the complex issue of imperial Britain's relationship with its far-flung colonial empire or, more specifically, the relationship between the domestic space in the imperial metropolis and the space of the colonies. Identifying a master-trope of "invasion" and "counterinvasion" found in much Victorian writing, David suggests that these terms become indispensable for explaining the mutual imbrication of domestic and imperial space (and by extension, of female and male gender relations) in nineteenth-century British culture. In the process, her book is able to take a prominent place within what is now a currently quite lively tradition of writing on gender and the colonial enterprise, a tradition that includes among its highlights the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sara Suleri, Jenny Sharp, and Anne McClintock.

Most of David's chapters carefully juxtapose a variety of male and female writers who deal with the Empire in some substantial way. The white Englishwomen whose work she examines have a curiously double role in the Victorian discourse on empire: both marginal and yet, somehow, central as well; both implicated in providing support for imperial projects and yet also interestingly observant and critical in ways white male officials could never be. The difference gender makes is perhaps most clearly marked in her discussion of Lord Macaulay and Emily Eden. The former, the author of the infamous "Minute" on Indian education (in 1835) and a voracious reader intimately acquainted with most of the "great books" of the Western tradition (but wholly ignorant of the "great books" of Indian Sanskrit culture), is best known for his rhetorical conversion of conquest into a lofty moral and cultural duty which the conqueror must perform for the conquered. The latter, the sister of a mid-nineteenth-century governor-general of India, offers a very different and refreshingly demystified view of Britain's exercise of power over India, one which stands in striking contrast to Macaulay's idealistic notion of imperial duty. In reading the two contemporaries together, David underlines a subtle paradox which runs like a refrain through *Rule Britannia*: that "an unease about empire, however tentative and small its expression, is virtually simultaneous with its glorification."

Surprisingly, David is able to drain some novel insights from a discussion of *Jane Eyre*'s implication in imperialism, a discussion begun in the 1960's with the publication of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and carried on by more than a few critics writing in the wake of Gayatri Spivak's essay on the two books. One might